

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

Addressing Social Security is not divisive—it is responsible.

The 109th Congress will be long on debate, but we must all work together to make sure that it is also filled with accomplishments for the American people. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate and the House as we pursue a policy of hope and empowerment.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENSIGN). The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I rise today to express my strong support for the bold and forward-thinking agenda that President Bush laid out for us last night.

The President was right in saying that the state of our Union is "confident and strong." We have been blessed with a healthy, growing economy, with more Americans going back to work, and with our Nation acting as a positive force for good in the world.

Our economy is bouncing back, but we all know that more must be done to make it stronger and more productive. The President understands that by making our economy more flexible, more innovative, and more competitive, we will keep America the economic leader of the world.

The President was very clear about the need for Congress to help reduce wasteful spending and burdensome regulations, make tax relief permanent, eliminate junk lawsuits, and lower health care costs. But I was most impressed with the President's willingness to tackle tax reform.

The President accurately pointed out that year after year, Americans are burdened by an archaic, incoherent Federal Tax Code. We all know that the Federal Tax Code is the No. 1 job killer in America, but very few of us seem willing to stand up and push for meaningful reform.

Earlier this year, the President established a bipartisan panel to study the Tax Code and to make recommendations. This is something I have been calling for for many years. When their recommendations are delivered, I stand ready to work with the President to give this Nation a Tax Code that is progrowth, easy to understand, and fair to everyone. If we want to secure the best jobs in the future, we must make America the best place in the world to do business. The President understands this, and I am hopeful that this body can make strides toward accomplishing that important goal.

Another goal the President put forward last night that is very close to my heart is the challenge of permanently fixing Social Security. I thought the President was clear about the financial problems facing the program. He pointed out what we all know but often fail to acknowledge—that Social Security will begin paying out more than it collects in just 13 years.

The current program does not have enough money to pay for all its prom-

ised benefits. Some may argue with this and say the trust fund will keep Social Security afloat until 2042, but I challenge them to show me the money, show me how they plan to make good on all of those IOUs. Our future seniors will not accept IOUs instead of real money, nor should they.

It is not enough to just oppose and obstruct one solution. The critics of reform must put forward their own plan. So far, we have not seen one.

I am very concerned about the misinformation surrounding this debate, and that is why I am introducing legislation today to require the Social Security Administration to update the information it gives American workers. The current statement entitled "Your Social Security Statement" fails to communicate the serious problems facing Social Security. The current statement reads like a passbook savings account and leads workers to believe that the Government is actually saving their money. It is not. The statement should tell workers that their combined employee and employer taxes total 12.4 percent of their wages throughout their life. It should tell them that none of that money is saved for their retirement. And it should tell them that each year that goes by, retirees get a lower and lower rate of return.

I thought the President's argument last night for the personal savings account was very accurate. He said:

Your money will grow, over time, at a greater rate than anything the current system can deliver, and your account will provide money for retirement over and above the check you will receive from Social Security. In addition, you will be able to pass along the money that accumulates in your personal account, if you wish, to your children and grandchildren. And best of all, the money in the account is yours, and the Government can never take it away.

That last point is the most important part of this debate. Reforming Social Security with personal accounts is about forcing the Government to start saving workers' money for the first time in history so that no President, no Congress, can ever again spend it on other programs.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### NOMINATION OF ALBERTO R. GONZALES TO BE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume executive session for the consideration of Executive Calendar No. 8, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Alberto R. Gonzales, of Texas, to be Attorney General.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 8 hours of debate equally divided between the Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. SPECTER, and the Senator from Vermont, Mr. LEAHY, or their designees.

Under the previous order, time shall alternate every 30 minutes between the majority and minority for the first 2 hours, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to support a man of remarkable achievement, Judge Alberto Gonzales, to be the next Attorney General of the United States.

Judge Gonzales is proof that in America, there are no artificial barriers to success. A man or a woman can climb to any height that his or her talents can take them. For Judge Gonzales, that is a very high altitude indeed. And luckily for his country, he is not finished climbing yet.

Judge Gonzales is quite literally from humble beginnings. He was raised in the town of Humble, with seven siblings. The eight of them, and their mom and dad, lived in a small two-bedroom house that Judge Gonzales's father and uncles built from scratch.

Judge Gonzales's parents were both migrant workers of Mexican descent. They met while picking crops in the fields of south Texas. Both spoke little English, and had only 8 years of schooling between them. The house they raised Al in had no hot water or telephone.

But by teaching their gifted young son the value of perseverance and hard work, Pablo and Maria Gonzales raised a man who has been one of the most trusted advisors to the President of the United States.

Judge Gonzales got his first job when he was 12. He sold Cokes at Rice University football games. No one in his family had ever gone to college, and at that age Al didn't expect to either. When each football game ended, and the Rice students streamed out of the gates and back to their dorms, Al wondered about the world of education they were going back to.

He graduated from MacArthur Senior High School, a Houston public school, after challenging himself in college preparatory classes. He enlisted in the Air Force and was stationed north of the Arctic Circle at Fort Yukon, AK.